

**BARRIERS BURNED AWAY.**

BY E. P. ROE.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

REMORSE.

Continued.

Muttering an oath, he turned on his heel and left her to herself.

The next morning her father bade her 'Good-bye.' In parting he said meaningly: 'Christine, beware!'

Again she turned upon him that peculiar look, and replied, in a low, firm tone:

'That expression applies to you also, let us both beware, lest we repent at leisure.'

The wily man, skilled in character, was now thoroughly convinced that in his daughter he was dealing with a nature thoroughly different from his wife's—that he was now confronted by a spirit as proud and imperious as his own. He clearly saw that force, threatening sternness would not answer in this case, and that if he carried his points, it must be through skill and cunning. By some means he must gain her consent and co-operation.

His manner changed. Instinctively she divined the cause; and hers did not. Therefore father and daughter parted as father and daughter ought never to part.

After his departure she was to remain at West Point till the season closed, and then accompany Mrs. Von Brakheim to New York, where she was to make a long visit as she chose—and she chose to make quite a long one. In the scenery and society of the officers at West Point, and the excitements of the metropolis, she found more to occupy her thoughts than she could have done at Chicago. She went deliberately to work to kill time and snatch such fleeting pleasures from it as she might.

They stayed in the country till the pomp and glory of October began to illuminate the mountains, and then (to Christine's regret) went to the city. There she entered into every amusement and dissipation that her tastes permitted, and found much pleasure in frequent visits to the Central Park, although it seemed tame and artificial after the wild grandeur of the mountains. It was well that her nature was high toned, that she found enjoyment only in what was refined or intellectual. Had it been otherwise she might soon have taken, in her morbid, reckless state, a path to swift and remediless ruin, as many a poor creature all at war with happiness and truth, has done. And thus in a giddy whirl of excitement (Mrs. Von Brakheim's normal condition) the days and weeks passed; till at last, thoroughly satiated and jaded, she concluded to return home, for the sake of a change and quiet, if nothing else. Mrs. Von Brakheim parted with her in much regret. Where would she find such another ally in her determined struggle to be talked about and envied a little more than some other pushing, jostling votaries of fashion?

In languor or sleep she made the journey, and in the dusk of a winter's day her father drove her to their beautiful home, but which, from association, was now almost hateful to her. Still she was too weary to think or suffer much. They met each other very politely, and their intercourse assumed at once its wonted character of high-bred courtesy, though perhaps a little more void of manifested sympathy and affection than before.

Several days passed in languid apathy, the natural reaction of past excitement; then an event occurred which most thoroughly aroused her.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

AN APPARITION.

Mr. Ludolph had hoped to hear on his return that Dennis was dead. That would end all difficulties. Mr. Schwartz did not know—he was not at last accounts. Ernst was summoned. With a bright, hopeful face he stated that his mother had just received a letter saying Dennis was a little better. He was much surprised at his employer's heavy frown.

'He will live,' mused Mr. Ludolph: 'and now shall I permit him to return to my employ, or discharge him?'

His brow contracted in lines of thought that suggested shrewdness, cunning, nothing manly, and warily he judged.

'If I do not take him, he will go to Mr. Frame with certainty. He had better return, for then both will be more thoroughly under my surveillance.'

'Comes on Christine's waywardness! there may be no contesting her, and my best chance will be in managing him. This I could not do if he were in the store of my rival.' And so for unconscious Dennis this important question was decided.

At last, as we have said, his delirium ceased, and the quiet light of reason came into his eyes. He looked at his mother and smiled, but was too weak even to reach out his hand.

The doctor coming in soon after, declared danger past, and that all depended now on good nursing. Little fear of his wanting that!

'Ah, mine Gott be praised! mine Gott be

praised! exclaimed Mr. Bruder, who had to leave the room: to prevent an explosion of his grateful, happy feelings, that might have proved too rude a tempest to Dennis in his weak state. He was next seen striding across the fields to a neighboring grove, ejaculating as he went. When he returned, his eyes shone with a great peace and joy, and he had evidently been with Him who had cast out the demon from his heart.

Day after day Dennis rallied back into life. Unlike poor Christine, he had beneath him the two strongest levers, love and prayer, and steadily they lifted him up to health and strength and comparative peace. At last he was able to sit up and walk about feebly, and Mr. Bruder returned rejoicing to his family. As he wrung Dennis' hand at parting, he said in rather a hoarse voice:

'If any von tell me Gott is not good and heareth not prayer, den I tell him he von grand heathen. Oh! but ve vill welcome you soon. Ve vill haf de grandest supper, de grandest songs, de grandest—but just here Mr. Bruder thought it prudent to pull his big fur cap over his eyes, and make a rush for the stage.

As if by tacit understanding, Christine's name had not been mentioned during Dennis' recovery. But one evening, after the little girls had been put to bed, and the lamp shaded, he sat in the twilight room, looking fixedly for a long time at the glowing embers. His mother was moving quietly about, putting away the tea-things, cleaning up after the children's play, but as she worked she furtively watched him. At last, coming to his side, she pushed back the hair that seemed so dark in contrast with the thin white face, and said gently:

'You are thinking of Miss Ludolph, Dennis.' He had some blood yet, for that is not the glow of the fire that suffuses his cheek; but he only answered quietly:

'Yes, mother.'

'Do you think you can forget her?'

'I don't know.'

'Prayer is a mighty thing, my son.'

'But perhaps it is not God's will,' said Dennis, despondently.

'Then, surely it is not yours, my child.'

'No mother,' said Dennis, with bowed head and low tone, 'but yet I am human and weak.'

'You would still wish that it were His will?'

'Yes; I could not help it.'

'But you would submit?'

'Yes, with His help I would,' firmly.

'That is sufficient, my boy; I have such confidence in God that I know this matter will result in a way to secure you the greatest happiness in the end.'

But after a little time he sighed wearily:

'Yet how hard it is to wait till the great plan is worked out.'

Solemnly she quoted:

'God will render to every man according to his deeds. To them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life.'

Braced by the stirring words of inspiration, strengthened by his mother's faith, he looked up after a moment and said earnestly:

'At any rate I will try to be a man in your sense of the word, and that is saying a great deal.'

She beamed at him through her spectacles over her knitting needles; and he thought as he gazed fondly at her, that in spite of her quaint, old-fashioned garb, and homely occupation, she appeared more truly a saint than any painted on cathedral windows.

He soon noticed that his mother had grown quite feeble, and determined on his return to take her with him, believing that, by his care, and wise use of tonics, he could restore her to her wonted strength. His increased salary now justified the step.

Early in November his physician said he might return to business if he would be prudent. He gladly availed himself of the permission, for he longed to be employed again.

The clerks welcomed him warmly, for his good nature had disarmed jealousy at his rapid rise. But in the greeting of Mr. Ludolph he missed something of the cordiality he expected.

'Perhaps she has told him,' thought he, and at once his own manner became tinged with a certain coldness and dignity. He determined that 'his father and daughter should think of him with respect.'

At the Bruder's the Millennium came with Dennis. Metaphorically the fatted calf was killed; their plain little room was trimmed with evergreens, and when he entered he was greeted by such a jubilant triumphant chorus of welcomes that almost took away his breath.

What little he had left was suddenly squeezed out of him, for Mrs. Bruder, dropping her frying-pan and dish-cloth, rushed upon him exclaiming:

'Ah! mine fren! mine fren! De goot Gott be praised,' and she gave him an embrace that made his bones ache.

Mr. Bruder stalked about the room repeating with explosive energy like minute-guns, 'Praise Gott! Praise Gott!' Ernst, with his great eyes dimmed with happy tears, clung to Dennis' hand, as if he would make sure by sense of touch as well as sight that he had regained his beloved teacher once more. The little Bruders were equally jubilant, though from rather mixed motives. Dennis was very well, but they could not keep their round eyes long off the preparations for such a supper as never before had blessed their brief career.

'Truly,' thought Dennis, as he looked around upon the happy family, and contrasted

its appearance with the time he had first seen it, 'my small investment of kindness and effort in this case has returned large interest—I think it pays to do good.'

The evening was one of almost unmingled happiness, even to his sore, disappointed heart, and passed into memory as among the sunniest-places of his life.

He found a pleasant little cottage over on the West side, part of which he rented for his mother and sisters.

With Mr. Ludolph's permission he went after them, and installed them in it. Thus he had what he needed all along, a home—a resting-place for body and soul, under the watchful eye of love.

About this time Dr. Arten met him—stared a moment, then clapped him on the back in his hearty way, saying:

'Well, well, young man! you have cause to be thankful, and not to the doctors, either.'

'I think I am,' said Dennis, smiling.

Suddenly the doctor looked grave, and asked in a stern voice:

'Are you a heathen, or a good Christian?'

'I hope not the former,' replied Dennis, a little startled.

'Then don't go and commit suicide again. Don't you know that flesh and blood can only stand so much? When an intelligent young fellow like you goes beyond that, he is committing suicide. Bless your soul, my ambitious friend, the ten commandments ain't all law of God. His laws are also written all over this long body of yours, and you came near paying a pretty penalty for breaking them. You won't get off the second time.'

'You are right, doctor, I now see that I acted very wrongly.'

'Bring forth fruits meet for repentance,' I am rich enough to give sound advice,' said the brusque old physician, passing on.

'Stop a moment, doctor,' cried Dennis, 'I want you to see my mother.'

'What is the matter with her? She been breaking the commandments, too?'

'Oh, no!' exclaimed Dennis. 'She is not a bit of a heathen.'

'I am not so sure about that. I know many eminent saints in the church who will eat lobster salad for supper, and then send for the doctor and minister before morning. There is a precious twaddle about 'mysterious Providence.' Providence isn't half as mysterious as people make out. The doctor is expected to look sympathetic, and call their law-breaking and its penalty by some outlandish Latin name that no one can understand. I give 'em the square truth, and tell 'em they've been breaking the commandments.'

Dennis could not forbear smiling at the doctor's rough handling of humbug, even in one of its most respectable guises. Then remembering his mother, he added gravely:

'I am truly anxious about my mother, she has grown so feeble. I want, and yet dread, the truth.'

The bantering manner of the good old doctor changed at once, and he said, kindly:

'I'll come, my boy, I'll be in within a few days, though I am nearly run off my feet.'

He went off muttering, 'Why don't the people send for some of the youngsters that sit kicking up their heels in their offices all day?'

Dennis soon fell into the routine of work and grew stronger rapidly. But his face had acquired a gravity, a something in expression that only experience gives, which made him appear older by ten years. All trace of the boy had gone, and his face was now that of the man, and of one who had suffered.

As soon as he recovered sufficient strength to act with decision, he indignantly tried to banish Christine's image from his memory. But he found this impossible. Though at times his eyes would flash in view of her treatment, they would soon grow gentle and tender, and he found himself excusing and extenuating by the most special pleadings that which he had justly condemned.

One evening his mother startled him out of a long reverie in which he had almost vindicated Christine by saying:

'A very pleasant smile has been gradually dawning on your face, my son.'

'Mother,' replied he, hesitatingly, 'perhaps I have judged Miss Ludolph harshly.'

'Your love, not your reason, has evidently been pleading for her.'

'Well, mother, I suppose you are right.'

'I suppose the Divine love pleads for the weak and sinful,' said Mrs. Fleet, dreamily.

'That is a very pleasant thought, mother, for sometimes it seems that my love could make black white.'

'That the Divine love has done, but at infinite cost to itself.'

'Oh! that my love, at any cost to itself, could lead her into the new life of a believer,' said Dennis, in a low, earnest tone.

'Your love is like the Divine in being unselfish, but remember the vital differences, and take heed. God can change the nature of the imperfect creature that He loves, you cannot. His love is infinite in its strength and patience. You are human. The proud, selfish, unbelieving Miss Ludolph (pardon mother's plain words) could not make you happy. To the degree that you were loyal to God, you would be unhappy, and I should surely dread such a union. The whole tone of your moral character would have to be lowered to permit even peace.'

'But mother,' said Dennis, almost impatiently, 'in view of my unconquerable love, it is nearly the same as if I were married to her now.'

'No, my son, I think not. I know your

pretty theory on this subject, but it seems more pretty than true. Marriage makes a vital difference. It is the closest union that we can voluntarily form on earth, and is the emblem of the spiritual oneness of the believer's soul with Christ. We may be led through circumstances, as you have been, to love one with whom we should not form such a union. Indeed, in the true and mystic meaning of the rite, you could not marry Christine Ludolph. The Bible declares that man and wife shall be one. Unless she changes, unless you change (and that God forbid), this could not be. You would be divided, separated in the deepest essentials of your life here, and in every respect, hereafter. Again, while God loves every sinful man and woman, He does not take them to His heart until they cry out to him for strength to abandon the evil He hates. There are no unchanged, un-renewed hearts in heaven.'

'Oh, mother, how inexorable is your logic,' said Dennis, breathing heavily.

'Truth in the end is ever more merciful than falsehood,' she answered gently.

After a little, he said, with a heavy sigh, 'Mother, you are right, and I am very weak and foolish.'

She looked at him with unutterable tenderness; she could not crush out all hope, and so, whispered, as before, 'Prayer is mighty, my child. It is not wrong for you to love. It is your duty, as well as your privilege, to pray for her. Trust your Heavenly Father, do His will, and He will solve this question in the very best way.'

Dennis turned to his mother in sudden and passionate earnestness, and said:

'Your prayers are mighty, mother, I truly believe. Oh, pray for her, for my sake as well as hers. Looking from the human side, I am hopeless. It is only God's almighty power that can make us, as you say truly one. I fear that now she is only a heartless, fashionable girl. Yet, if she is only this, I do not see how I came to love her as I do. But my trust now is in your prayers to God.'

'And in your own, also; the great Father loves you, too, my son. If He chooses that the dross in her character should be burned away, and your two lives fused, there are in His Providence just the fiery trials, just the circumstances that will bring it about.' (Was she unconsciously uttering a prophecy?) 'The crucible of affliction, the test of some great emergency, will often develop a seemingly weak and frivolous girl into noble life, where there is real gold of latent worth to be acted on.'

'Christine Ludolph is anything but weak and frivolous,' said he. 'Her character is strong, and I think most decided in its present bent. But as you say, if the Divine Alchemist wills it, He can change even the dross to gold, and burn unbelief to faith.'

'Hope! Christine. There is light coming, though as yet you cannot see it. There are angels of mercy flying toward you, though as yet you cannot hear the rustle of their wings. The dark curtain of death and despair can never shut down upon a life linked to heaven by such true strong prayers.'

And yet the logical results of wrong-doing will work themselves out, sin must be punished and faith sorely tried.

Dennis heard incidentally that Christine was absent on a visit to New York, but knew nothing of the time of her return.

He now bent himself steadily and resolutely to the mastering of his business, and under Mr. Bruder's direction resumed his art studies, though now in such moderation as Dr. Arten would commend.

He also entered on an artistic effort that tax his genius and powers to the very utmost, of which more anon.

By the time Christine returned, he was quite himself again, though much paler and thinner than when first entering the store.

After Christine had been home nearly a week, her father, to rouse her out of her listlessness, said one morning:

'We have recently received quite a remarkable painting from Europe—you will find it in the upper show-room, and had better come down to-day and see it for it may be sold soon. I think you would like to copy one or two figures in it.'

The lassitude from her New York dissipation was passing away, and her active nature beginning to exert itself again. She started up and said:

'Wait five minutes and I will get sketching materials and go down with you.'

By reason of her interdict, made so earnestly, and confirmed by her manner, at West Point, her father had never mentioned the name of Dennis Fleet. The very fact that no one had spoken of him since that dreadful day when tidings came in on every side that he could not live, was confirmation in her mind that he was dead.

She dreaded going to the store, especially for the first time, for everything would irresistibly remind her of him whom she could never think of now without a pang. But as the ordeal must come, why the sooner it was over the better. So a few moments later her hand was on her father's arm, and they were on their way to the Art Building as in former and happier days.

Mr. Ludolph went to his office, and Christine, looking neither to the right or to the left, ascended to the upper show-room, and at once sought to engage every faculty in making the sketch her father had suggested.

(To be continued.)